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HISTORY OF
WESLEYAN METHODISM
IN THE
CREWE CIRCUIT.

BY THE
REV. CÆSAR CAINE.

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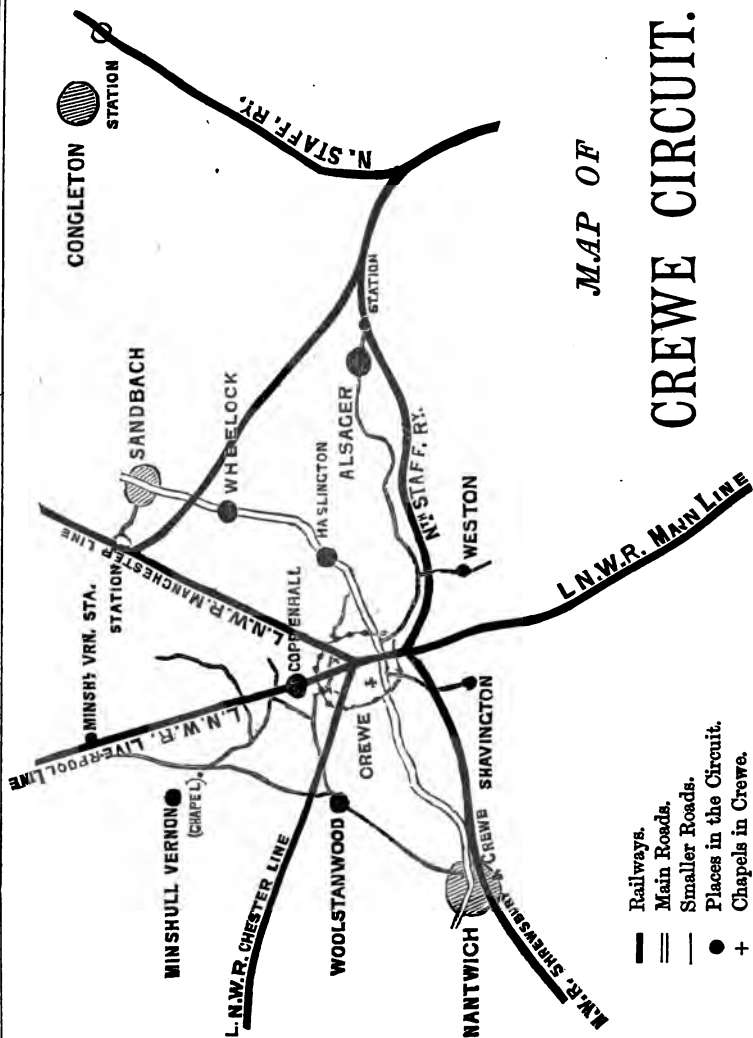


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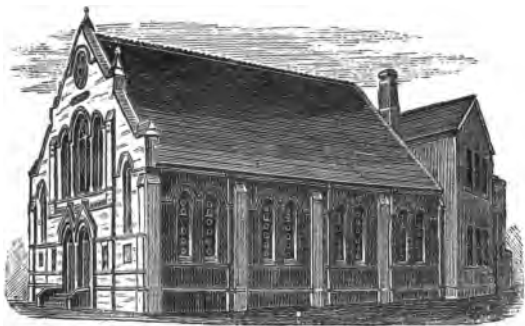
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MAP OF CREWE CIRCUIT.



HISTORY
OF
WESLEYAN METHODISM
IN THE
CREWE CIRCUIT.

BY THE
REV. CÆSAR CAINE.



EARLE STREET WESLEYAN CHAPEL AND SCHOOLS.

**THE PROCEEDS OF THE SALE OF THIS BOOK WILL BE DEVOTED
TO THE BUILDING FUND OF EARLE STREET WESLEYAN
CHAPEL, CREWE.**

CREWE:
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1883.



AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED

TO

HIS WORSHIP THE MAYOR OF CREWE,

Alderman John Ainsworth, J.P.

PREFACE.

THOUGH some of the circumstances in connection with the Crewe Wesleyan Circuit are in themselves interesting, yet these chapters are not designed for more than local circulation. This story of the growth of Wesleyan Methodism, in and around Crewe, is written primarily for the friends of the Circuit.

The need of such a manual is indicated by the inquiries constantly made in conversation and meetings, as to the names of deceased workers, dates, &c. Besides, our young people should know at least the chief incidents in the history of the society with which they are associated.

I must present my thanks to Mr. R. Whittaker and other friends, who have assisted me in gathering information. Respecting the work at Trinity and Hightown, I must acknowledge my indebtedness to the Circuit Plans issued during the Superintendency of the Rev. R. N. Barritt.

C. C.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.	PAGE.
Crewe—A Contrast : Railways : A Central Situation : Growth of Town : Present aspect	9

CHAPTER II.

Wesleyan Methodism in Crewe—First Services : <i>Trinity Society</i> : The First Leaders : Taken into Nantwich Circuit : First Places of Worship : First Minister : Made Head of a Circuit : Present Church Erected : <i>Hightown Society</i> : The West End : Rapid Progress : Chapel Erection : Schools : Enlargement : A Strong Society : <i>Earle Street Society</i> : Consecrated Wealth : Difficulties : Day of Feeble Things : Progress : Bricks and Mortar : Ways and Means : Finances : Spiritual Success : <i>West Street Mission</i>	12
--	----

CHAPTER III.

Wheelock Society—A Methodist Servant : Miss Harrison : Persecution : Progress : Obituaries : Chapel Extension : Other Workers	30
---	----

CHAPTER IV.

PAGE.

Alsager Society—Fellow Workers : Unpromising Soil : An Open Door : A Household Saved : Looms, Sermons, and Prayers : Converting Power : Wheelock Sunday School : <i>Chapel Lane Chapel</i> : Accessions : Clerical Tolerance : Building Again : Death : <i>Wesley Place Chapel</i> : Debt : Unity : “What hath God wrought”	39
---	----

CHAPTER V.

Coppenhall Society—Revival : An Earnest Curate : Methodism Reaping : A Church in a Farm Kitchen : Building : Poor Farmers : Times of Refreshing	53
--	----

CHAPTER VI.

Shavington Society—Methodists but no Class : On the Plan : Helpers : An Audley Service : Power from on High : Warrenites : Who shall have It? : The Decision : Providence Chapel : A Vanished Sunday School : Fruit of a Revival : A Revival again : A School : Loss : New Chapel	57
--	----

CHAPTER VII.

Haslington Society—A Waste of Strength : Pulling Together : A Need Supplied : Encouragement.....	66
---	----

CHAPTER VIII.

Minshull Vernon Society—Moat Farm : A Little Sanctuary : Renovation	68
--	----

CHAPTER IX.

PAGE.

Weston Society—A Revival in Congleton Circuit: Methodism Alone: Beautiful Chapels: Following Suit.....	69
--	----

CHAPTER X.

Woolstanwood Society—Plodding: Loss: Success: Removals	73
---	----

APPENDIX.

First Plan of Nantwich Circuit: First Plan of Crewe Circuit: Ministers who Travelled in Nantwich and Crewe Circuit, 1849: Ministers who have Travelled in Crewe Circuit: Ministers who have gone out from Crewe Circuit: Memoranda	76
--	----

I.—CREWE, THE RAILWAY TOWN.

AMONGST English towns Crewe is in one particular almost unique,—its rapidity of growth. The town at present consists of 4,900 houses, with a population of about 25,000. Forty years ago, however, it was a mere Cheshire township, possessing a few scattered farm houses

The first railway constructed in England was, as is well known, the Manchester and Liverpool line, which was designed to meet the requirements of the immense traffic between the cotton town and the port of the north. This line was opened in 1830. Eight years later, the London and Birmingham railway was opened. Later, the Manchester and Birmingham railway and other lines were opened. These lines were finally amalgamated as the London and North Western Railway, and as such were opened August, 1842. At this juncture the splendidly central situation of Crewe began to attract the notice of the railway authorities. They saw at a glance that numerous railways must converge there, and that it would be the most convenient

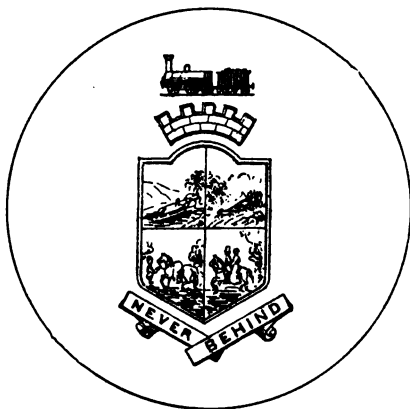
place for the construction and repair of locomotive engines, carriages, and waggon. Therefore, in 1843, the Grand Junction Works were transferred from Edgehill, Liverpool, to Crewe. The streets which were first formed by the Company were, in order,—Delamere Street, Market Street (then Coppenhall Street), Sandon Street, Prince Albert Street, Earle Street, Liverpool Street, Manchester Street, Crewe Street, and Church Street.

The railway works and the town continued to increase till 1861, when new works were erected. This event was noticed by the *Illustrated London News* for January 19, 1861. From facts given in that paper we learn that great progress indeed had been made in the first twenty years of the town's history. We find that Crewe is no longer a few farm houses. "It is a town of 1,500 dwellings, and 9,000 inhabitants, and possesses its Church, Chapels, Market Hall, Mechanics' Institute, Public Schools, and Municipal organisation."

The last twenty years have seen even greater development and progress. This is manifest from the following figures. In 1843,

when the works were opened, 151 men were employed, and the stock of engines numbered 75. In 1861, at the erection of the new works, there were 1,930 men employed in the works, and 2,039 at the out stations, and the company stabled 574 engines. At present about 6,000 men and boys are employed at the works, and about 8,500 at the out stations. There are, also, upwards of 2,360 engines in stock.

The town is well and regularly built, is exceedingly clean, and possesses all the institutions, &c., which may be expected in a town of the size. The town was incorporated by Act of Parliament in 1877,—the Corporation seal being as shown in the woodcut below :



The spiritual interests of the town are well provided for,—there being two churches and one mission church, fifteen chapels and several mission rooms, and a detachment of the Salvation Army.

This short sketch of the origin, progress and present aspect of the town of Crewe, will doubtless be of value and interest, as we follow the history of Wesleyan Methodism in the town and neighbourhood.

II.—WESLEYAN METHODISM IN CREWE.

ALTHOUGH many of the “places” on the plan of the Crewe Wesleyan Methodist Circuit date much earlier, yet it was not till 1835 that the Wesleyan Methodists established preaching services in any way designed for those residing in Crewe, or the immediate neighbourhood. This was at Wistaston, in a farm house, the occupants being a family named Galley.

There was, certainly, preaching at this time, at Church Copenhall, but the extension of the

town in that direction (west) was of a later period.

TRINITY CHURCH.

At last, in 1842, a service was commenced in Crewe itself,—preaching being occasionally conducted in the vicinity of a saw-pit, in a field nearly opposite the site now occupied by Trinity Wesleyan Church. In this same year Crewe was placed on the Nantwich Circuit Plan, and services were regularly held at the house of Mr. Dutton. The work prospered, and various classes were formed, the leaders being Mr. Dutton, Mr. Caulton, Mr. Bailey, Mr. T. Stubbs, Mr. W. Pickford, Mr. R. Hill, and Mr. Owen.

In 1843 a temporary preaching place was built and opened by the celebrated Dr. Beaumont. The first chapel was opened six years later. During its erection, the Wesleyans were kindly allowed to hold their services in a school-room belonging to the London and North Western Railway Company. The chapel, which was situated in Mill Street,—and which has been superseded by the present Trinity Church,—was a neat brick building with a stuccoed front, and accommodated about six hundred worshippers.

The first Wesleyan minister appointed to live in Crewe was the Rev. W. Henley. This was in 1849. He left at the following Conference, and was followed by the Rev. W. Swallow, who remained three years. He was succeeded by the Rev. R. Lewis, upon whose removal, after a residence of two years, Crewe was left without a resident minister.

In 1860 the Rev. J. Jackson Wray was appointed Home Missionary in Crewe, and remained three years, during which time the Mill Street schools were built. About this time an impetus was given to the town by the erection of the "New Works," and, as the town grew more rapidly, the Wesleyan society made more marked progress.

The successor of the Rev. J. Jackson Wray was the Rev. Wesley Brunyate. In his time (1865) the Rev. Joseph Workman was appointed Home Missionary for the west part of the town, which enterprise resulted ultimately in the erection of the Hightown Wesleyan Chapel and Schools, of which more anon. In 1869 the Nantwich Circuit was divided, and Crewe became the head of a Circuit, with the Rev.

Austin Davey, who was the resident Minister at the time, as the first Superintendent. Occasionally the head of a Circuit is the oldest place in the Circuit, but to this arrangement Crewe provides an exception. Several societies in the Crewe Circuit are older than the oldest town society. The reason why so new a town and so modern a society was made the head of a Circuit is, however, obvious. To recapitulate a little, the Circuit was formed thus :— Congleton, by the union of the southern extremities of the Chester and Macclesfield Circuits, was formed 1803. By division from Congleton, Nantwich Circuit was formed 1808. In 1842 Crewe was placed on the Nantwich Plan. In 1869 Nantwich Circuit was divided ; and Crewe, having become an important town, was made the head of the new Circuit.

In 1871 the trustees of the Mill Street Chapel began to realise the desirability of erecting a more commodious place of worship ; and this object once formed, they kept it prominently in view until, in 1877, their heart's desire was accomplished in the completion of the large, handsome, and comfortable Trinity

Wesleyan Church. This result must be attributed mainly to the self-denying and indefatigable toil of the Rev. John Kirtlan, supported by the earnest labours of the congregation. This chapel was opened on the 30th of May, 1877, by the Rev. Marmaduke C. Osborn. It is a modern English Corinthian structure, cost upwards of £5,000, and will accommodate 1,000 persons. There are at present about 160 church members, 433 Sunday school scholars, 400 children in the day schools, with a staff of two certificated, three assistant, and two pupil-teachers; and every other institution necessary for the working of so important a society.

In 1881, a commodious and convenient house was purchased by the Circuit authorities, for the residence of the Superintendent Minister,—“Harben Villa,” pleasantly situated at the west end of Nantwich Road,—upon the occupancy of which the Rev. W. Lees entered in December of that year.

HIGHTOWN WESLEYAN CHAPEL AND SCHOOLS.

At the Conference of 1864, through the liberality of the late W. R. Johnson, Esq., of The Cliff,

Wybunbury, Home Mission work was commenced in the Corn Exchange. The Rev. J. A. Hems-worth was sent to conduct the enterprise. After a few weeks, the place being neither central nor suitable, a room was taken in Chetwode Street, where the cause progressed most encouragingly. A good congregation was gathered, and a Sunday school begun. In a few months the room was inconveniently crowded, both for public worship and school purposes. A much larger place was then taken in West Street, over the Co-operative Stores. Here both congregation and school again rapidly increased. The Rev. Joseph Workman took charge of the Mission in 1865.

The success of this work was so great that steps were taken to secure land on which to build a chapel. After much prayer, deep anxiety, and several plots had been looked at, taking into account the probable wants of the neighbourhood, the site on which the chapel and schools now stand was decided upon; and, after many meetings and much deliberation, it was purchased for £500. Considering the low state of Methodism in the town at that time, it was thought a bold undertaking; but the experience

of subsequent years has given evidence of the wisdom of the action then taken.

After many difficulties, deemed by some impossibilities, had been surmounted, early in the year 1867 the foundation stone of the chapel was laid by Samuel Turnbull, Esq., of Manchester. In all the preparatory work, the Rev. Wesley Brunyate took a deep and untiring interest, and worked hard for its accomplishment.

The chapel (without galleries) was opened by the Revs. J. Rattenbury, Dr. Hannah, W. Jackson, W. Arthur, M.A., S. Coley, W. Brunyate, and others. The cause now took a firm hold of the neighbourhood; the congregations increased, and sinners were saved.

The school, which was still taught in a room over the stores in West Street, greatly needed better accommodation. At last, other and larger premises became absolutely necessary; and, notwithstanding formidable obstacles, vigorous efforts were made for the erection of schools. In 1869 the foundation stones were laid. In October of the same year, the Sunday school was opened; and in January, 1870, the day schools were opened by Mr. J. Hinchsliff, as

Head Master, who has continued to the present time in that position. These schools continued to prosper, so that early in 1871 they had to be enlarged. The congregation, too, had increased so much that there was not a pew and scarcely a single sitting to let, and there were many persons desiring to rent seats. Some, who had waited long, had to go to other places of worship to be accommodated. The friends now began to consider seriously the advisability of erecting galleries in the chapel; and, after much anxiety as to funds, the trustees resolved to erect galleries, a vestry, an organ, and make other needful alterations. Fortunately they were enabled to carry out these improvements, and the chapel was re-opened in June, 1874, by the Rev. J. Rattenbury and others. In consequence of the rapid progress of the schools, which were unhealthily full, it was absolutely necessary again to enlarge them, or send the children elsewhere. The enlargement, which consisted of an additional schoolroom and classrooms, was completed in 1878; and now the schools comprise three large rooms and seven classrooms, affording accommodation, according

to Government regulations, for about 864 scholars.

The chapel and schools, which are now complete, cost £6,675; and with the exception of £550 debt in connection with the last enlargement and improvement scheme, there is no debt on the premises. Judging from the zeal and liberality of the friends here, this small debt will soon be a thing of the past.

Altogether these buildings form an extensive group, erected on a very prominent site in that part of Crewe known as Hightown. The chapel, which has accommodation for 900 persons, is in the Gothic style of architecture, and is built of white and red brick, with stone dressings. The tower is also built of the same material, and is surmounted by a spire of 98 feet in height. The schools are situated on the side of the chapel, and extend round two sides of a quadrangle, which is used as a playground. The schools are built of red brick, and the design is simple Gothic.

There are at present 226 members of society, and 26 on trial. There are also 800 scholars on the books of the day school. The full teaching

staff comprises three certificated teachers, four assistant teachers, and eight pupil teachers. This is the largest school in the town. In the Sunday school there are 600 scholars and 60 teachers.

In connection with Wesleyan Methodism in the neighbourhood, and this society in particular, an interesting event occurred November, 1882, in the election of one of the class leaders,—Alderman Ainsworth, J.P.,—to be the Mayor of the town. On Sunday, November 12th, the Mayor and Corporation attended the Hightown Wesleyan Chapel, when the Rev. Ebenezer Cole preached an able sermon to a crowded congregation, from Nehemiah v. 19, “Think upon me, my God, for good, according to all that I have done for this people.”

EARLE STREET WESLEYAN CHAPEL AND SCHOOLS.

In the early part of the year 1875, a conviction, which had been growing in the minds of all Christian workers in the town, that the Earle Street district,—especially the lower part of it,—was a suitable sphere for Home Mission

labour, resulted in the Wesleyan body taking a room over the Co-operative Stores, Earle Street, for preaching and school purposes,—W. R. Johnson, Esq., of Wybunbury, making a donation of £150 to begin and assist in carrying on the work. Here is a fine example of what consecrated wealth can do! In the liberal and loving gifts of this gentleman, we see the means by which Mission operations were commenced at Hightown and Earle Street. Now, at the one place we have a congregation, membership, and schools, second to no religious community in the town, and at the other a good and progressing Methodist society.

The first general superintendent of the Mission was Mr. T. Welch, now of Stockport. The work prospered surprisingly, the school especially making rapid progress. The difficulties of the work, however, were neither few nor small. The present Mayor of Crewe, Alderman Ainsworth, who took a lively interest in the inauguration of the Mission, says,—“Earle Street, previous to our Mission-room being opened there in 1875, especially the eastern part of it, was spiritually and morally low.

There were no religious services in the neighbourhood, and the people might have said, 'No man cared for my soul.' The children in large numbers were running about the streets on the Sabbath, dirty, and very much neglected. The first Sabbath we opened our school there, the sight presented was distressing indeed. It had a motley and withal a grotesque appearance,—some of the children not washed, some without hats and bonnets, some without neckerchiefs, some without jackets, and some without shoes and stockings. The children themselves seemed to enjoy the scene. Evidently many of them came out of curiosity. As to order, that was out of the question. The children had no idea of being under authority, and for some time they went in and out at pleasure. One afternoon, I noticed a shrewd-looking lad, with a knowing and rather roguish expression, take off his jacket, and as though he had some idea of what was decent, he gave it to his brother who was jacketless, and said, 'Here, Jack, put this on! this isn't the place for me, and aw know tha'll be staying here!' and away he went. One Sabbath afternoon, during preaching service,

it took me all my time to mind one boy, who persisted all the time in tying and untying his clogs, pulling them off and putting them on, &c. The work required the utmost amount of patience, tact, and perseverance." The first return respecting the numerical strength of the Mission was made in the Circuit books under the date of June, 1875, when one class was reported numbering two members. In September, 1875, the Rev. S. Miles was appointed as home missionary minister of the district, and a year of success was the result. In March, 1876, twelve church members were reported. The following September, the Rev. James Todd was appointed to succeed Mr. Miles. During his residence in the town, a site opposite Mirionterrace was secured, with the prospect of some day building a chapel. In the March following the appointment of Mr. Todd, instead of twelve, there were twenty-four members reported. The successor of the Rev. J. Todd was the Rev. P. Hawkes. To any one knowing the history of the Mission, it would appear that Mr. Hawkes came at the right time and did the right work. He thoroughly organized the Mission. Mr.

Hawkes was with the Mission two years, during which time temperance meetings, mothers' meetings, Saturday meetings for children, and classes for young men, were vigorously and efficiently worked, in addition to the holding of preaching services. When Mr. Hawkes removed to another sphere of labour, the twenty-four members with which he began had become nearly double that number, some of the new converts being rescued from decidedly low life. In September, 1879, the Rev. C. Holman became pastor of this little church, and good was accomplished. In March of 1880, the Mission reported 47 members. The Rev. Cæsar Caine was appointed to the work at the Conference of that year.

For two years previous to this, it had been felt that Earle Street congregation and school were outgrowing the accommodation of its meeting room. From September, 1880, however, a chapel-building scheme was heartily entered into by the ministers of the Circuit and all friends of the Mission; and on April 2nd, 1881, which was certainly a red letter day in the annals of Crewe Methodism, the memorial stones of the

new chapel were laid. Four stones were laid in the usual form, by A. Mackie, LL.D., J. Hall, Esq., Leek, Alderman Ainsworth, J.P., and J. Charlesworth, Esq., Red Hall. Addresses were delivered by Revs. G. W. Olver, B.A. (then principal of Southlands Training College), and J. S. Jones, chairman of the district, and others. The proceeds of the day amounted to upwards of £200, of which £41 were collected by the Sunday school children. The premises were opened on September 21st, 1881, by the Rev. R. Roberts and the Rev. J. P. Newman, of New York, ex-chaplain of the United States Congress. The Revs. Charles Garrett, P. Mackenzie, J. Nance, J. Nettleton, and others, also conducted opening services. The collections at these services greatly aided the building fund, for which energetic canvassing had been prosecuted during the year.

The chapel measures 54ft. 3in. by 42ft. internally, and the schoolroom and classroom on the ground floor 51ft. by 21ft., there being also a similar school and class room upon the upper floor. The design is of Gothic character. The front elevation shows two principal entrance

doorways, over which is a large three-light window, above which is a rose window. The interior of the chapel is pewed, on the ground floor, with open ends, and the floor forms an inclined plane. The rostrum, which is a handsome structure, is at the opposite end to the principal entrance. Over the vestibule, opposite the rostrum, there is a commodious gallery, capable of seating 120 persons, which is used by the choir and Sunday school scholars. The ceiling of the chapel is half way up the roof, and below the ceiling line is seen the arched and cusped roof trusses. The windows are glazed with leaded quarry lights, with cathedral tinted glass. Ventilation is effectually carried out on Tobin's vertical system. The site is an excellent one, having a frontage to Earle Street, and another to Brierley Street, and occupies a central position in the neighbourhood. The entire cost of chapel and schools, including furniture and purchase of land, amounts to £2,500.

Notwithstanding the assistance given to the Building Fund by subscriptions, stone-laying, and opening services, it was felt that further efforts

were needed to place the Funds in a creditable state. A Circuit Bazaar scheme was already afloat, having been planned at the Annual Circuit Tea Meeting in the June previous. The plan of this Bazaar may be briefly stated as follows. Certain ladies, at Trinity Church, promised to provide a stall at the Bazaar. A similar engagement was made by the ladies of Hightown congregation. Of course, Earle Street undertook to do the same, and more, if it could. The remaining places so divided themselves as to be responsible for three stalls. This Bazaar was opened Feb. 23rd, 1882, by Mrs. F. Cooke, of The Brooklands, who throughout acted as treasurer to the scheme. Though this was the fourth Bazaar in the town in sixteen months, it was by far the greatest success the town ever witnessed with one exception,—in which case unusual patronage was shown by the London and North Western Railway Company,—a fact which speaks well for the zeal of the lady workers.

At the time of writing, the grants from the Connexional Funds, viz., £90 from the Chapel Building Committee, £200 from the Extension Fund, are almost obtained. A supplementary

sale about to be held will place the society in a position to claim the grants, and then the third Wesleyan cause in the town will be in an easy financial position. So sure are the friends of raising the necessary amount (£200), that notice has been given that Conference requirements will be met by the beginning of March, 1883.

The whole scheme has involved an outlay of £2,500. The endeavour is to raise as a minimum £1,675, as, when this sum is raised, the above £290 will be paid from the Connexional Funds. There is no doubt, however, that £2,000 of the £2,500 expended will be covered. This is considered a very great achievement, the congregation and society being composed entirely of working men and their families. There has been an encouraging growth of the cause in every department during the past two years. The society now numbers about 70, with several on trial. There are 330 scholars, being an increase of about 100 during the past twelve months. The Library (a new organisation), Band of Hope, &c., are efficiently worked. The congregations are good, and, what we could never say before, *constant*. The promise

of future success augured by the present aspect of affairs is most cheering.

WEST STREET MISSION.

There is a splendid site secured in this rapidly increasing neighbourhood, with the prospect of some day erecting the fourth Wesleyan Chapel in Crewe. Early this year (1883) the Congregational friends relinquished a mission which for some time they had conducted in a room over the co-operative stores. The leaders of our Hightown cause have taken the room, and are conducting at present Sunday evening service. Doubtless this is the beginning of a permanent mission.

III.—WHEELOCK.

SO far as can be ascertained, the first Methodist who lived in Wheelock was Miss Harrison. This lady was born in 1763. Though a strict Churchwoman, "at the solicitation of a pious female servant, who was a member of a class at Sandbach, she was induced to hear the Methodists. The preacher

was Thomas Moor. The word came in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. Miss Harrison was stripped of all her Pharasaical notions, deeply convinced of sin, and brought to instant decision to seek the salvation of her soul. These gracious impressions were deepened under a discourse which she heard from Joseph Bradford, and to which she thus alludes,—‘I heard Mr. Bradford (February, 1785) with profit. He met the society, and desired any seriously disposed person to remain. You may be sure I should be one of the last to go. Mr. Bradford asked me many questions, and amongst others, if I should like to join the society. I said I should, but it was not agreeable to my family. I will put my trust in One that will not deceive me, and if I *do* join, by God’s grace, I will not disgrace the people of my choice.’”* Miss Harrison joined the Methodist Society this same year. “In deep distress she sought the Lord sorrowing for two years. At a love feast held by G. Story on Christmas day, in the Old Chapel, Congleton, she received the pardoning love

* Wes. Meth. in Congleton Circuit. By Rev. J. B. Dyson.

of God. So overwhelming was the manifestation of mercy that she could with difficulty refrain from crying aloud, 'He is come! He is come! I have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth!'"*

By joining the society, Miss Harrison incurred the displeasure of her parents. But after meekly bearing persecution for the truth's sake, she had the gratification of seeing her mother become first a hearer, and then, with other members of the family, a member of the class.

How idle is the complaint of those who say that they are of no use, and can do no good. The conversion of this whole family was effected by the unpretending influence of a godly female servant. There can be no doubt that the life of this domestic constantly witnessed for Christ. Who would have heeded her if her life had not been exemplary? We cannot expect to have an influence for good without holiness of life; but the humblest, truly devoted to God, need never despair of being useful or doing good.

In 1794 Miss Harrison was married to Mr.

* Wes. Meth. in Congleton.

Garside, and removed to Congleton, where she lived until 1831, in which year, April 9th, she fell asleep in Jesus. At the time of Miss Harrison's conversion, there was no place of worship in Wheelock, religious services being occasionally held in cottages. In a few years permission was obtained to hold Methodist services in a barn at Brook Farm. The spirit of persecution was active. People hated the name of Methodist, and annoyed them as much as possible. On one occasion, while service was being held in an old thatched cottage, the door was fastened outside, and the chimney stopped up with sods by a man on the roof, so that the smoke could not escape.

Notwithstanding many difficulties, the work continued to progress; and in 1808, the year in which Nantwich Circuit was formed by the division of Congleton Circuit, a chapel was built, the land being given by Mr. J. Farr, and the foundation stone being laid by John Mellor, local preacher and leader, through whose influence chiefly the chapel was erected. The trustees were Messrs. Mellor, Whittaker, Grindrod, Ashcroft, Stringer, Lindop, Williams, Breeze,

Garnett, Parton, Horton, Stokes, Cornes, Bourne, and Cookson, all residing in the Nantwich Circuit.

The accounts of the Sunday school begin with the year 1825, when Messrs. Naylor and Watkins preached the anniversary sermons on April 17th, and collections were made amounting to £12 13s. 0½d. Mr. Thomas Ashcroft was the first Sunday School Superintendent. Mr. J. Whittaker and Mr. J. Caulton in turn succeeded to the office. In 1840 Mr. John Lowe became Superintendent, and has retained the position ever since.

Wesleyan Methodism in Wheelock has ever rejoiced in a succession of godly men and women, possessing intense and active Methodist sympathies. After the inauguration of the School in 1825, no striking events occurred in the history of this society for some years; and the history of the cause can be best followed by recalling memoirs of some of the worthy characters referred to. In 1829 Thomas Sherwin died, a man powerful in prayer, and also useful to the society in its service of song, being an excellent singer.

George Cornes, of Hassall, died at a great age, about 1830. One of his quaint sayings is well remembered,—“I could do with the devil if he always came wearing his clogs, but when he comes in his silver slippers he gets over me.”

Mr. James Whittaker took great interest in Wheelock Methodism from 1808 to his death in 1840. He was thoroughly devoted to the cause of God, and greatly beloved. As a leader and steward, he was most strict in his attention to discipline. As a preacher, he was earnest and affectionate, endeavouring to awaken the careless by preaching from such texts as “What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise, and call upon thy God,” &c.; at other times consoling the believer, and leading on to higher experience. The Sabbath but one before his death, he preached his last sermon, with great fervour and zeal, in the Wheelock Chapel, from Isaiah l. 10,—“Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.”

John Prophett, a genial, hearty man, popular and successful as a leader, died in 1845. He also possessed good musical abilities, and efficiently led the singing at public worship for many years.

Samuel and Mary Lowe, noted for their constant attendance at the services, were next lost to the cause. Mr. Lowe died in 1852, and his widow in 1854.

During this period (1825—54) the society had made steady progress, and had been exceedingly helpful to the cause at Alsager, and also to that at Coppenhall; many persons resorting from both neighbourhoods to the services held here, and the children of Methodist families at Alsager attending Wheelock school.

The chapel was enlarged in 1855, and a school-room added. In 1872 further accommodation was required, for both the congregation and school, and the present beautiful and comfortable Gothic chapel was built. Advantage was taken of the chapel being built on an incline,—a commodious school-room, with good class-rooms, being placed beneath. The outlay involved by this building scheme, with cost of

land, &c., was £2,500. The chapel seats 406 persons, and the school has accommodation for 300 scholars. The old chapel, built in 1808, and enlarged in 1855, was sold, and the proceeds, £190, devoted to the building fund of the new premises.

In 1875 the society passed through a season of trial, by the death of Mr. Thomas Witter. Thomas Witter was convinced of sin under a sermon preached in a farmhouse, from the text, "God be merciful to me a sinner;" and subsequently, returning alone from a Methodist service, the words, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the spirit," were applied to his heart, and he realised a sense of Divine forgiveness. On the latter occasion he arrived home late, and found the family had retired to rest. Arousing every member of the household, he warned them of their spiritual danger, and commended them to God in prayer. One of them was at first inclined to ridicule his warning, but was silenced by the new convert telling him, "Thou art my

brother after the flesh, not after the Spirit." This rebuke led to his conversion. In three months the whole family joined the Wesleyan Society. This was in 1826. In 1831 Mr. Witter married, and came to live at Wheelock. In 1834 he began to preach, and his labours in the pulpit were richly owned of God. On one of the leaders leaving the neighbourhood, Mr. Witter was appointed to his class, and continued in this office till his death.

On March 28th, 1875, whilst preaching in Wesley Place Chapel, Alsager, from John xiv. 2, 3, "In my Father's house are many mansions, &c.," he was seized with apoplexy, and fell in the rostrum. From this attack he partially recovered, but on July 31st he fell asleep in Christ.

There are others, who are remembered with esteem and affection, who were once actively employed in connection with this Society. Of these there may be named William Stubbs, William Vickers, Mary Ashley, Thomas Ashcroft, who had care of the chapel finance, and induced the bulk of the congregation to pay for their sittings; Ralph Horton, James Lewis, a

faithful leader and local preacher, at whose house prayer meetings and other services were held ; and James Mainwaring, who is still living. He was converted at the age of 15, and held both the office of local preacher and leader. He was born in 1793, and is now in his 90th year.

IV.—ALSAGER.

THE history of Wesleyan Methodism in Alsager commences with the names of two good men, who were also successful in introducing Methodism into several other villages of the Crewe and Nantwich Circuits. Benjamin White and John Mellor, who were ever on the look-out for an opportunity of opening new preaching places, came about the year 1804 to Alsager, and intimated to some of the cottagers that if any of them would open their house for Methodist preaching a preacher would be regularly appointed to conduct service on Sunday afternoons.

Alsager at this time was very different from Alsager as we know it now. The land was then

little better than a common, overgrown with heath and furze. The houses were few; and these were chiefly small thatched cottages. The people knew little of true godliness. Prior to the opening of the Church in 1790, it may be said that they knew nothing. Though the Church effected an improvement, yet at the time of which we speak justification by faith, the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, the life sanctified to the service of God, were matters the people knew little about.

In response to the proposal of Benjamin White and John Mellor, one Mary Cotton said that she would not only open her house for preaching, but would undertake to do her utmost to gather a congregation. This house was on the "Moss," about a mile from the Chapel Lane Wesleyan Chapel, and is still standing. At the time these arrangements were made, the family at what was henceforth to be the preaching house numbered four; James Cotton, his wife Mary, their daughter Mary, and their son-in-law William Breeze. Though the house is strictly in Haslington township, the whole family regularly attended Alsager Church,

William Breeze being the clerk, and otherwise actively employed in Church duties. Under Methodist preaching, every member of this home received a deep conviction of the necessity of a personal interest in the atonement of Christ, and before long were all rejoicing in a consciousness of adoption into the family of God.

The lower story of the house formed one large room, in which two hand-looms stood, the family being weavers. On a Sabbath, this room was cleared of all unnecessary furniture and fitted up for preaching. When so arranged, about thirty or forty people could be accommodated. Though the congregation which gathered here was generally very happy, yet, long before the building of a chapel was contemplated, this loom shop was not found to be congenial to the religious fervour of all the worshippers. It is told that on one occasion a plain, uneducated, yet godly man, who was praying as he knelt near the looms, had no liberty. He suddenly stopped, and then, in a lower voice, full of trouble, said, "O Lord! I can't pray among looms." Samuel Brindley,—a quaint old man, full of

wise and witty sayings, who turned every circumstance to good account,—was conducting the meeting, and, thinking that a man who could not pray anywhere needed correction, prayed that God would bless, amongst others, men who couldn't pray among looms. After preaching had been held here regularly for some time, at a service conducted by John Mellor and James Whittaker, of Wheelock, several manifested a desire to flee from the wrath to come. A class meeting was organised at once, and altogether about ten joined the society. Mr. Whittaker undertook to lead the class, and came once a week from Wheelock to Alsager to carry out this new work.

Before long, however, William Breeze manifested such a holy familiarity with divine truth, such an insight into Christian experience, and such an earnest desire for the spread of scriptural holiness, that he was appointed class leader, thus relieving Mr. Whittaker, who filled several offices in connection with the society at Wheelock. Shortly after, William Breeze became a local preacher, and was known through all the country side as a "good man," and may

be regarded as the father of Alsager early Methodism.

God was with these people, and many times in the simple cottage service did the Holy Spirit convince of sin, and grant a sense of pardon. The conversion of Amy Hopkins was one of many such cases. Her home was some fifteen miles from Alsager, but being on a visit to Barthomley, and hearing that there was Methodist preaching in the neighbourhood, and never having met with these people, she was attracted to the service at Alsager Moss.

One of the hymns sung at that Sunday afternoon service particularly arrested her attention. Before the hymn was finished, she had committed two verses to memory, though she had never heard the lines before, and on reaching the house where she was staying wrote them out lest she should forget them. The words were :—

“ I thirst, thou wounded Lamb of God
To wash me in thy cleansing blood,
To dwell within thy wounds ; then pain
Is sweet, and life or death is gain.
Take my poor heart, and let it be
For ever closed to all but thee !
Seal thou my breast, and let me wear
That pledge of love for ever there !”

The sweet subduing influence which Amy Hopkins experienced under the singing of these lines, was the beginning of powerful strivings of the Divine Spirit, which ultimately led to her conversion. Soon afterwards she came to live in the neighbourhood of Alsager. She immediately joined the society class, and after a time became the wife of John Plant, a Methodist, of whom we will speak later on. Mrs. Plant made a model Methodist; she died triumphant in the faith, and in her funeral sermon, which was preached by her leader, Mr. Breeze, it was stated that during the more than thirty years she had been a member, she had only failed four times to meet the Minister at the quarterly "renewal of tickets," and that on an average she had not been absent from class three times a year, though a mile of rough country lanes lay between her door and the class meeting. These facts are given here to show the kind of results which followed the conversions which took place in these cottage services.

But what provision was made for the religious education of the children of the families attending these services? There was no school in

connection with the Church, and the Wesleyan friends did not feel strong enough to open a school; so that the children were sent to Wheelock and Lawton, as there was a Wesleyan school at both these places. Most of the young people went to Wheelock. They started in time for the morning school, carrying their dinners in small bags or handkerchiefs. After school they trooped off to the house of the Superintendent (Mr. James Whittaker) to dine. They attended school again in the afternoon, stayed for preaching, and came home in time for tea. Many of those children have served their generation by the will of God, and are now fallen asleep. Others are still living,—some being aged pilgrims completing the last stages of a long journey to the promised rest. When they refer to their Sunday school days, they never fail to speak with words of loving praise of the motherly kindness shewn them by Mrs. James Whittaker during their dinner hour at Wheelock Farm.

One passing word to our young friends. Some of our Sunday school Hymns remind us of the advantages we possess, living amid Gospel

privileges, over those poor children who are brought up amid heathen sins and the cruel rites of idolatry. But we need not go so far as this for facts which ought to inspire us with gratitude for the benefits we enjoy. How would our dear young friends at Alsager like to walk the dusty lanes in the heat of summer, or through muddy ruts in winter, at times against sleet and driving winds, all the way from Alsager to Wheelock to Sunday school, not returning till evening?

We have two Sunday schools now, one at each end of the village. Be thankful, young friends, that the opportunities for acquiring Biblical knowledge, and above all, that the good news of Calvary is brought so near to you. Be mindful lest your easy access to the benefits of the Gospel shall cause you to under-rate their value!

But to return. As time passed on, the little church at Alsager Moss began to find that the accommodation afforded by the loom shop was insufficient for the increased and still increasing congregation. The members began to talk about the possibility of building a chapel. By-and-

bye this general conversation took a more decided form, in the shape of meetings called for the purpose of entering fully into a "bricks and mortar" scheme. It was not, however, till very many protracted meetings had been held, that it was finally decided to build. One of the members provided a site, by giving to the appointed trustees a portion of his garden. This was John Plant, who first became acquainted with the Methodists, and gave his heart to God, in Mr. Breeze's cottage. In due course the chapel was erected, and in the summer of 1834 was opened by the Rev. Charles Janion, who preached from Rev. ii. 17. This chapel is the present school room at Chapel Lane.

About this time the society received a goodly accession of members, which came about in this wise. A class, up to the time of the erection of Chapel Lane Chapel, had met in a house just beyond where the railway station stands now, the members all attending Lawton Heath Chapel, in the Congleton Circuit. But on the opening of Alsager Chapel, in 1834, the members left Lawton Heath, and became absorbed in the Alsager Society.

A short time after the chapel was opened, a Sunday school, announced as being "for children of all denominations," was commenced. The late Thomas Holland was the first superintendent, and under his prayerful guidance the school flourished and did good work. The clergyman at this time was the Rev. J. Richardson, at whose request the scholars, accompanied by their parents, teachers, and the members of society, went to Church on the first Sunday morning in each month, when a sermon was delivered either to the young, or to parents and teachers, on the education of the young. Mr. Richardson's first text was Eccles. ii. 6. For several years, this gentleman's name stood first among the donations on the Sunday School circular for £1 1s. O for more of this love and unity between the different bodies of the followers of Christ!

The society and school steadily grew, until in the year 1852 a second chapel was opened by the Rev. Dr. Beaumont and others. This chapel stands by the side of the old one, on a second plot of land presented to the trustees by John Plant.

Five years later William Breeze, after nursing this cause through its infancy, and doing good service as a local preacher through the then wide Nantwich Circuit, passed to his reward. He died January 21st, 1857, and was buried in Alsager churchyard.

About ten years later than this a change came over the aspect of the village. Alsager is about six miles from the Potteries. At the time of which we are about to speak, villa residences were built here by gentlemen who owned works, &c., in the neighbouring towns. This influx of population and enterprise resulted in a demand among the Wesleyans for better chapel accommodation. . A meeting of the trustees of the Chapel Lane Chapel was called in 1867, to consider the advisability of erecting a new and more central chapel, to meet the requirements of the increasing population. The first few trustee meetings considered only the question of providing a larger chapel, in a more central part of the village, the old chapel to be disposed of by sale, and the proceeds to be devoted to the New Building Fund.

Out of this another scheme arose, which was

simply to renew and enlarge the old chapel. The trustees could not unanimously decide on either scheme; and a new Trust was formed, which purchased land at the other extremity of the village, and proceeded with the erection of a new building, the result being that the beautiful sanctuary in Wesley Place was opened on the 1st of June, 1869, by the Rev. S. R. Hall, President of the Conference.

The outlay involved by the scheme was £2,400, which sum, by the introduction of an organ, &c., was raised to nearly £2,900. Great efforts were made to bring down the debt to a reasonable amount. About three years after the erection of this chapel, a number of the trustees and leading members of the Wesley Place society left the village, and at the annual trustee meeting of 1880, it was found that there was still a debt of £1,150 on the new premises, and no hopeful prospect of reducing it in an appreciable degree. But something must be done,—everybody said so. “How can we best reduce the debt?” became the question of the day.

A few ladies began sewing meetings with a

view to a sale of work, hardly presuming to anticipate how very successful their effort would be.

In June of 1880 a Bazaar was held, when £400 were raised. With this sum a note of hand for £350 was cancelled, and £50 was banked. An arrangement was then entered into with the Connexional Chapel Committee, by which it was agreed that if the friends at Alsager raised £200 more, a grant of £100 would be made to them, and also a loan of £100 without interest, repayable by yearly instalments. In July, 1881, a supplementary sale of work was held, when £110 more were realised. This sum, with the £50 in the bank, and a few special donations, brought the necessary £200 to hand. No praise can be counted extravagant when given to the zeal and earnestness of the friends at Wesley Place in their efforts to clear their beautiful sanctuary of debt.

In the year 1876, the late Rev. James Scholes came to reside here as supernumerary, and remained till 1878, when he removed to Uttoxeter, where he entered into rest, 1881.

The matter of having two Wesleyan chapels

in this village has often been a subject of remark and criticism. Now, it is frankly acknowledged at the outset that one element in the circumstances which led to the erection of a new chapel while the old one was standing, was the faction in the Trustee meeting of 1867. However, the two societies and their officials, as they exist at present, had nothing to do with this, and we rejoice that between the two places there is thorough love and unity. Further, we are sure, from a thorough knowledge of the district, that if both societies will efficiently work its own immediate neighbourhood, there will be found elbow room and enough of work for both.

The position of Wesleyan Methodism in Alsager at present is this : We have, in the two chapels and schools, property of the estimated value of £3,200, with a debt of £400. There are two earnest and increasing societies, with efficiently conducted Sunday schools, and every other necessary Church organisation.

But what we see is only a part of the results of our work in Alsager. Many are the young people who have been trained in our schools,

and have then left the neighbourhood to enter service or learn a trade, and who would have had to face the world with the disadvantage of having no knowledge of the vital truths of Christianity, and perhaps no experience of Divine grace, had it not been for the prayerful instructions of our teachers. Many, too, are the happy souls which have been led to Christ, and cheered and strengthened through our ministry, and at last, with words of joy and victory on their lips, have passed through death triumphant home! Think of John Mellor's first sermon in the weaving shop! Then think of what has been accomplished! Surely we are led to say, "What hath God wrought!"

V.—COPPENHALL.

TOWARDS the beginning of the century Church-Coppenhall was very unlike the Coppenhall of to-day. The present Coppenhall consists of four lanes forming cross-roads, three of which, and especially two, are well built with comparatively new cottage property. These

cottages have been erected almost entirely through the location of the London and North Western Railway Company's works in Crewe. At the time Methodism arose here, the neighbourhood boasted only a few scattered farm houses, old cottages, &c. In the year 1806 a flood of religious influence and revival power passed through the south part of the then Congleton Circuit, and several Wesleyan causes were commenced. Coppenhall was one of these societies.

Soon after the formation of the Wesleyan society here, a new chancel was placed in the Parish Church. This work occupied some ten or twelve months, during which time the Rector was absent from the Parish, his supply being the Rev. Mr. Dickenson. The earnestness and preaching power of this Clergyman were such, that the people came from all round the country side to hear him. The Church was crowded, and numbers were converted. Many of these united themselves to the Wesleyans. Among those who were thus brought into the Wesleyan Church were a Mr. Williams and his wife. Mr. Williams ultimately became a class leader.

The great antidote for the jealousies which arise between the branches of the Church of Jesus Christ, is an intense desire on the part of all to save souls. In times of special and general awakening, such as have come about under the missions of Messrs. Sankey and Moody, or the Gospel Temperance movement, we find on the same platform Ministers of every Christian denomination, and all urging the people to go to some house of God, and join some Church, *anywhere*, so long as they can hear the Gospel and learn the way to heaven. The Church when in earnest has no time for party spirit, jealousies, and strife. Bitter party spirit is a sure indication of formality, coldness of love to Christ, and neglect of perishing souls.

Soon preaching services were conducted in true Methodist fashion in a farm house at Maw Green, then the residence of the late Mr. R. Lindop. Mr. Lindop was a local preacher, and succeeded Mr. Williams as class leader. He continued with the society till 1871, when he died in the faith at the advanced age of 93.


About 1825 a chapel was erected. In 1869 this building was sold, and the present sanctuary

erected at a cost of upwards of £600. The land was given by Mr. T. Mason, then a class leader. The erection of this chapel was prosecuted under great difficulties. The cattle plague having visited this part with great severity, the formation of a subscription list was very slow work, and, notwithstanding the incessant labours of Mr. J. Mason and Mr. J. Horton, who collected most of the money, the requirements of the Chapel Building Committee were not complied with, and no aid was received from the Connexional funds. However, the friends worked away with good heart, and in 1874, by a Bazaar, raised £130, which improved their position very considerably. A scheme is now contemplated for freeing the chapel from the remaining debt.

Times of refreshing have visited the neighbourhood, through the efforts of our people here. In 1834 there was a very wonderful work of God, which was really the means by which the membership became so augmented as to finally demand a new and larger House of God. Coppenhall was again the scene of gracious revival during the period the Rev. J. H. Hopkins laboured in the Circuit.

The school is of uncertain date, no books being kept prior to the erection of the new chapel. There are at present 120 scholars, a number which is steadily increasing.

VI.—SHAVINGTON.

N the first Plan of preaching services held in the Nantwich Circuit, printed October, 1808, we find every country place of the present Crewe Circuit named except two. Shavington is one of these exceptions. At this date, however, there were Wesleyans of long residence and good influence in the village. The reason why a preaching place had not been opened here was that the people, who were in the habit of frequenting Methodist preaching, attended the services held at Lea Hall, Wybunbury, the residence of Thomas Breeze, where public service was conducted on alternate Sundays, at nine o'clock in the morning and at two o'clock in the afternoon.

Shortly after this October Plan was issued, a class meeting was commenced at Shavington,

which was met by John Profit in his own house, situated about the centre of the village. This step was followed by the name of the village being placed on the Circuit Plan, and the place receiving regular preaching appointments. The class meeting and the preaching were now conducted in the house of John Clifton, as John Profit left the village to reside elsewhere.

These cottage services were continued in comparatively uneventful routine, yet amid blessed influences of the Divine Spirit, until the year when William Austin, one of the members, offered a portion of his garden for the erection of a chapel. At this time Christopher Robinson, of Shavington Villa, and George Aston, of Bank Farm, were the chief supporters of the society; and, led by these gentlemen, the little church entered fully into the chapel scheme, and the building now used as a schoolroom was erected.

Though Mr. Robinson was not a member of the Wesleyan society, yet his Christian character and deep interest in the spiritual welfare of the neighbourhood was highly appreciated by the villagers, especially by the members of the little Methodist society.

As there was no local preacher resident in Shavington, the duty of conducting the service fell upon Mr. Robinson whenever a preacher failed to come according to appointment. On such occasions, which were by no means uncommon, Mr. Robinson did not attempt to preach or address the people, but read in an interesting manner a sermon from some such author as the Rev. John Wesley. As soon as the chapel was opened, a Sunday school was commenced, which continued to flourish till the year 1834. What happened then we shall see further on. About the year 1830, some four years after the erection of the chapel and opening of the school, this little society was visited by a gracious revival. One Sunday evening, two young men went from Shavington to a service at Audley, conducted by Mr. Summerfield, a local preacher. One of the young men was a member of the Wesleyan society, but the other had hitherto held out against the strivings of the Spirit. However, in the service at Audley Wesleyan Chapel, he was so convinced of sin that he returned home full of distress. He sought the company of his mother, who was

a godly woman, and requested her to pray with him, as the burden of his sin was intolerable. Their united supplications for mercy aroused the house, and soon the whole family joined in prayer to God. The young man not finding peace, and the spirit of supplication becoming more fervent, the family retired to the chapel to seek from God, in his own house, a special manifestation of pardoning love. This prayer meeting in the chapel aroused many of the cottagers near, and some joined the family in prayer, while others peered in at the windows, wondering what was the matter. Soon pardon was spoken to the troubled heart, and God's people shouted aloud for joy. No work was done the following day by the little band that had spent the midnight in wrestling, prevailing prayer with God.

Full of the Spirit, longing for similar scenes they had witnessed the preceding night, they went from house to house, singing, praying, and inviting their neighbours to the prayer meetings which they had arranged to hold during the week. The Rev. Charles Janion was in the Circuit at this time, and so far as the many

engagements of a wide country Circuit would allow him, also entered into the work. In a fortnight, thirty professed conversion, five of whom subsequently became efficient and honoured local preachers. Nor was Shavington blessed alone. Neighbouring societies felt the influence, and were roused, strengthened, and increased; in fact many of the converts joined other societies.

But a great trial succeeded this revival. In the year 1834, the unhappy strife led by Dr. Samuel Warren found its way with withering effect into this village. So effectually did the Warrenite party spread the spirit of discord, that with few exceptions the whole society was carried away. The chapel was taken possession of by the disaffected party, and those who remained loyal to Wesleyan Methodism were denied admittance.

The Wesleyan services, however, were not given up, but were continued in a cottage.

Though the Wesleyan cause was now extremely weak, it shared to a very large extent the sympathy of the village people, and several times were the doors of the chapel forced open

and guarded, so that the party still loyal to Conference might use their rightful premises in peace.

It would not be pleasant to narrate every episode in this unfortunate affair. The Warrenites, however, became quite tired out, and they accordingly built another chapel on the principle of £5 shares, calling it "Providence Chapel." The building afterwards passed into the hands of the "Methodist Free Churches," a title taken by a union formed by the Warrenites, and others who had seceded from the parent society.

The Wesleyans now went back, with what congregation remained with them, to their chapel, and obtained without delay every legal security by having their property settled on the "model deed," a precaution which they had overlooked when the building was first erected. Though the chapel was secured, and the services held in peace, the friends found with grief that as one result of the disturbance nearly all their Sunday school scholars were lost to them. During the period of the strife, many of the young people had gone to the Primitive Methodist body, and nearly all the

rest were taken by the new sect. The result was, that from this date till 1862 there was no properly organized Wesleyan Sunday school in the village.

From this time things went on pleasantly again.

In the year 1842 the Wesleyan Church at Shavington reaped fruit of the revival of 1830, through the late James Bourne coming to reside in the village. Mr. Bourne was one of the five young men who found peace in this revival, and who afterwards became a local preacher. He was then a young man, twenty years of age, living with his parents at Weston. The great want of many of our village societies is a "head,"—a leading man who holds himself responsible, in a great measure, for all that takes place, and to whom the people can look for sympathy and guidance. Such a head had our Shavington friends from the year 1842, when Mr. Bourne first took up his residence among them, till 1879, when he fell asleep in Christ. In every sense in which the term can be understood of a layman, Mr. Bourne was the strength and shepherd of our Shavington cause.

A revival of the work of God again visited Shavington in 1858. The Revs. J. G. Wilson and H. Oldfield were ministers of the Circuit (Nantwich) at this time, and this visitation of gracious power and revival, which sealed their labours, resulted in the addition of thirty members to the Shavington society. This was followed, as might be anticipated, by an enlargement of the chapel. During the alterations, the services were conducted in a large room in Shavington Hall, kindly placed at the disposal of the Wesleyan friends by Mr. Davenport, who then resided there. About three years later, on June 21st, 1862, the Sunday school, which had been suspended for twenty years, was re-inaugurated. Though only nineteen children presented themselves on the first Sunday, the school steadily increased, and now numbers upwards of one hundred scholars.

In the year 1871 the society sustained a great loss by the death of William Wainwright, a leader, who had held to the society through all the troubles of 1834. His labours were marked by punctuality and zeal; he died triumphant in the faith.

The year 1875 witnessed the building of a

new Wesleyan Chapel in this village. The old chapel, notwithstanding the enlargement, was too small for the needs of the society and congregation, and further enlargement was impossible from want of land. The first meeting called to discuss the scheme was held on November 11th, 1875, when sixty members and friends interested in the cause were present, and a sum of £167 was promised. The present chapel, which cost, with purchase of land, £950, was forthwith erected, and was opened in March, 1877, by the Revs. George Scott, W. Barrowclough, George Dickenson, Jabez Ingham, and Alderman Ainsworth. This beautiful chapel, of semi-Gothic architecture, occupies a good and central position in the village, and is almost free from debt. Since the death of Mr. Bourne, which occurred two years after the opening services just referred to, Mr. John Platt has done good service here. For some time, through want of workers, he necessarily occupied every post in chapel and school affairs, and his regular and persevering efforts have already been productive of encouraging results.

Through losses by removal and the erection of other places of worship, our society is not so large at present as it was a number of years ago; but everything, especially the Sunday school, is encouraging and hopeful.

VII.—HASLINGTON.

THOUGH there is a mystic oneness which gathers all believers of every age and place unto the one Church of Christ, yet we can hardly hope to see external uniformity among the different Christian communities. The unity of the Church has a multiformity. At times, however, we find this principle running to extravagance. Haslington, a village about a mile and a half from Crewe, rose around a few thatched cottages with the development of the Crewe works and town. Here, with a very small population, we find six places of worship, three being held by different branches of Methodism. Such a state of things is not desirable. There is, however, this redeeming feature in the case,—these sections work as branches of one harmonious family, not as antagonistic factions.

It was in the year 1868 that the Wesleyan friends at Crewe felt they should do their share in providing for the spiritual needs of the people in this village, especially as *there were Wesleyans here* who, hitherto, at great inconvenience, had worshipped and met in class at Coppenhall. Accordingly, one Sunday afternoon, the Rev. James Kent preached in a cottage in the "Dingle," and thus inaugurated the Wesleyan Methodist society in this place.

In the year 1870 a plain little chapel, with a very neat interior, was erected at a cost of £247. One result of the work here has been the conversion of those,—of whom thirteen can be counted,—who, having left Haslington, are now useful and honoured members of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in other places, or who, having served their generation according to the will of God, are fallen asleep. Though the cause here cannot, at least for some time, be a large one, yet the present state of affairs augurs fairly for a village society. The workers are encouraged by a steadily increasing school of some fifty interesting young people, the older scholars being members of society.

VIII.—MINSHULL VERNON.

THE Wesleyan Methodist society in Minshull Vernon was commenced in the year 1816,—the late John Garnett, who then resided at Moat Farm, opening his house for a class meeting and Methodist preaching. Prior to this time the Wesleyans of Minshull Vernon worshipped with their brethren at Coppenhall.

A short time after the inauguration of the Wesleyan cause, Mr. Garnett left the neighbourhood, but his brother, the late George Garnett, who came to reside at Moat Farm, still kept the house open for Methodist services, and undertook the leadership of the class. Mr. Garnett held this office of leader till his death in 1872.

In 1829 a small chapel was erected. This was chiefly through the exertions of the late Thos. Walker, who virtually gave the land on which the chapel stands, only a nominal sum being paid for it.

The congregation was at this time, and for many years, much better than at present. The falling off has been occasioned by the removal

of members to farms at a distance. In 1877 this society lost a valuable member of the congregation by the death of Mr. William Hall.

In 1881 the chapel was decorated, and re-seated so as to provide accommodation for 150 persons, involving, with the cost of a new harmonium, an outlay of £88. This sum was speedily raised, the following items being noteworthy:—Subscriptions, £29 2s. 6d., of which three members gave £5 each; re-opening services, £17 15s.; tea at Park Hall, £15 19s. 6d.; tea at Red Hall, £11 18s.

There is at present a comfortable and internally pretty chapel, a regular congregation, a society of 17 members, and a small Sunday school.

IX.—WESTON.

TWO or three chapels with as many Ministers, and even one chapel with its Minister, are arrangements occasionally known now-a-days as "Circuits." The rise of the Weston society brings before us a Circuit of very different dimensions, but a fair specimen

of the ordinary Methodist Circuit in the early years of the century.

The Rev. J. Beaumont, father of the celebrated Dr. Beaumont, says,—“At the Leeds Conference, 1806, I was appointed to Congleton Circuit with Mr. James Fussell. On Monday evening I arrived, and preached with considerable freedom. Samuel Fox and Thomas Pemberton were stirred up to seek the perfect love of God. Since then the Lord hath revived His work in Congleton, and various other parts of the Circuit. During this year, the Coppenhall, Weston, and Chorlton societies were raised, except a few persons at Coppenhall.”*

Wesleyan Methodism thus began in Weston in 1806, being then in Congleton Circuit, though sixteen miles distant. Such distances are not altogether unknown in Methodism to-day.

In 1820 we find a weekly service, and a class conducted in the house of Mary Cork. The members at this time were Mr. and Mrs. Bourne, of Crotia Mill; Mr. and Mrs. Cornes, of Holly Bank Farm; Mr. and Mrs. Thomas

* *Wes. Meth. in Congleton Circuit.* By Rev. J. B. Dyson.

Johnson, Mr. G. Woodworth, Mrs. Malam, Mr. Bennett, and Mr. George Cornes.

The class met, and the preaching service continued, till 1831, when, owing to the want of accommodation for those who attended the services, a chapel was erected to seat upwards of one hundred persons. This place became crowded at every service, there being no Church, or other chapel in the neighbourhood. Wesleyan Methodism the first to the rescue! Not an uncommon case!

After a time a Church and a Primitive Methodist Chapel were erected. Of course both of these had representatives in the Wesleyan congregation, and the attendance on Wesleyan preaching was, on the erection of the other sanctuaries, considerably diminished.

A dingy chapel cannot be found in Crewe Circuit. Almost every chapel is a new building, and those which are not of recent date have been lately re-pewed and decorated. This is as it should be.


There are those who talk as though the chapel or Church should be as bald and as bare as a barn. They say if there be four walls and a

roof, and the cold and rain be kept outside, nothing more is needed,—the divine blessing will rest upon the worshippers in the building. Is it not better to make the sanctuary as beautiful as we can afford? We admit that love, faith, and reverence are true worship, wherever they are offered; whether they go up from fishing boats on the Lake of Galilee, or the catacombs of Rome, or even from the kitchen of the farmhouse or cottage. We admit that the great Architect and Artist of the universe, who drew out the plans of it, and built up the heavens and earth, beautifying all with every variety of form and colour, cannot be benefited by beautiful and costly houses of prayer. We admit that no display, either of building or ceremonial, can ever take the place of the worship of the heart. But, after all, when we may choose between the bare and the beautiful building to be dedicated to God, surely we must choose that which is best and lovely. If a man has a right spirit, can he furnish his own house comfortably, and be at ease as he remembers that the House of God is bare and unclean? If we have the spirit of Mary, who sat at the feet of the Saviour, and

broke the alabaster box wherewith to anoint him, we shall surely delight to spend our money in making the House of God bright and beautiful.

The Weston friends were the last, but not the least earnest, to re-pew and decorate their chapel. This scheme was undertaken in 1881, at a cost of £80. The re-opening services were conducted on February 5th, 1882. At the close of the day, it was announced that the entire cost of the alterations was covered by the collections and donations of the members. Three members of the congregation each contributed £10 to the object. One of these, at the same time, presented to the chapel a beautiful American Organ. The chapel, as now seated, will accommodate ninety persons. There is also a small but promising school.

X.—WOOLSTANWOOD.

HE Wesleyan Methodist cause here is one of those little societies, the characteristic of which is, that they have done quiet steady work for the church without attracting much attention.

No striking event marks the history of Woolstanwood Methodism, but there has ever been here a succession of earnest plodding workers in the cause of Christ.

The first meeting place of the Society was Marshfield Bank Farm, where both "preaching" and "class" were held from 1830 till 1870. During the latter part of this time the house was occupied by Mr. J. Bolderston.

The congregation gradually increased until in 1870 a neat little chapel, costing about £200, was erected on land given for the purpose by Hugh Chadderton, of Milton (Stoke). A little more than twelve months after the erection of the chapel, the society sustained a great loss by the death of Mr. J. Bolderston, who had been for many years the class leader. Mr. Bolderston entered into rest January 13, 1872. So unexpected was his decease, that on the day of his removal from this little society he visited the chapel to see if any mishap had befallen it, the day being very stormy.

The society saw its palmyest days from 1873 to 1876.

In June, 1873, the whole of the debt was

cleared off the chapel. During this period two classes were held weekly,—one at the chapel, and the other at West End Farm. One of these classes numbered 30 members.

Since that time there has been a gradual falling away in congregation and membership; caused by Methodist families leaving the neighbourhood, and the new residents not being interested in Methodism.

There is, however, a regular congregation, and, at present, an increasing membership.

The Rev. George Bolderston (St. Columb) was formerly associated with this society as local preacher, &c.

THE FIRST PLAN OF NANTWICH CIRCUIT.

Itinerant and Local Preachers' Sabbath Day Plan for Nantwich Circuit,

From October 9th, 1808, to January 1st, 1809.

PLACES.	OCTOBER.							NOVEMBER.							DECEMBER.							NAMES.
	M	A	E	16	23	30	6	13	20	27	4	11	18	25	1	8	15	22	29	5	12	
Nantwich .....	..	2 $\frac{1}{2}$	6	W	W	J	J	W	W	J	J	W	W	J	J	..	..	..	..	..	..	Wilson
Winsford .....	..	2	6	J	9	W	10	J	3	W	8	J	7	W	2	..	..	..	..	..	..	Jones
Wheelock .....	..	..	6	..	J	..	W	..	J	..	W	..	J	..	W	..	..	..	..	..	..	Allwood
Buerton .....	..	2	..	2	6	9	12	6	9	8	6	9	2	6	7	..	..	..	..	..	..	Penkethman
Faddley .....	..	2	..	13	..	14	..	12	..	4	..	14	..	13	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	Vernon
Weston and Chorlton	10	2	..	7	..	10	..	2	..	9	..	13	..	12	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	Bebington
Weston and Hough	10	2	..	..	4	..	13	..	6	..	7	..	10	..	4	..	..	..	..	..	..	Kennerley
Lea Hall and Betley	9	2	..	14	..	13	..	10	..	7	..	6	..	2	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	Wood
Haelington and Coppenhall .....	..	3	6	..	7	..	4	..	10	..	9	..	6	..	8	..	..	..	..	..	..	Mellor
Minahull-Vernon and Coppenhall ..	..	2	6	4	..	2	..	7	..	13	..	12	..	10	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	W. Morgan
Wheelock .....	..	2	6	10	..	7	..	3	..	2	..	10	..	9	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	A. Morgan
Alsager and Wheelock	9	2	..	..	10	..	9	..	7	..	10	..	8	..	6	..	..	..	..	..	..	Moss
Bickerton and Peckforton	10	2	..	3	..	5	..	8	..	14	..	3	..	11	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	Hughes
Aston Green and Wettinhall	10	2	..	11	..	4	..	9	..	12	..	6	..	14	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	Withinslaw
Bull's Green .....	..	2	..	..	12	..	3	..	14	..	4	..	14	..	12	..	..	..	..	..	..	Lythgoe
																						Nixon

N.B.—The Quarterly and Local Preachers Meetings will be on Friday, December 30th.

The Original is in the possession of Mr. VERNON, Buerton.

Size of Original Plan 9x6 inches.

THE

Services.

186

28	5	Services & Residences.
1. John 20.	Isaiah 5. Acts 6.	
, Q.	Hill.	Y, Nantwich Road.
, Q.	Davey.	ING, Beech Street.
ng.	Davey, E	nt, Didsbury.
.	Davey.	, Shavington.
		, Basford Hall.
nt, Q.	Davey, A	n, Alsager.
nt, Q.	Ford.	aker, Wheelock.
ng.	Davey.	Mill Street.
		, Wheelock.

*Ministers who have Travelled in "Nantwich and
Crewe Circuit."*

Prior to 1849 the district was "Nantwich Circuit."

1849—Abraham Watmough, William Henley.

1850—James Godden, William Swallow.

1851—James Godden, William Swallow.

1852—James Godden, William Swallow.

1853—John Boyd, Robert Lewis.

1854—John Boyd, Robert Lewis.

1855—William Davies, Henry Needle.

1856—William Davies, Henry Needle.

1857—William Davies, Henry Needle.

1858—John G. Wilson, Henry Oldfield.

1859—John G. Wilson, Henry Oldfield ; Henry B. Britten,
Supernumerary.

1860—John G. Wilson, Henry Oldfield, James J. Wray ;
Henry B. Britten, Supernumerary.

1861—James Mowat, Thomas Brackenbury, James J. Wray ;
Henry B. Britten, Supernumerary.

1862—Samuel Allen, Thomas Brackenbury, James J. Wray ;
Henry B. Britten, Supernumerary.

1863—Robert H. Hare, Thomas Brackenbury, Wesley
Brunyate ; Henry B. Britten, Supernumerary.

1864—Robert H. Hare, Chas. G. Turton, Wesley Brunyate ;
Henry B. Britten, Supernumerary.

1865—Robert H. Hare, Chas. G. Turton, Wesley Brunyate,
Joseph Workman ; Henry B. Britten, Super-
numerary.

- 1866—Jabez Ingham, Charles G. Turton, Joseph Workman,
James Kent ; Henry B. Britten, Supernumerary.
- 1857—Jabez Ingham, Charles Crawshaw, Joseph Workman,
James Kent.
- 1868—Jabez Ingham, Charles Crawshaw, Austin Davey,
James Kent ; William Wears, Supernumerary.
- In 1869 the Circuit was divided.
-

Ministers who have Travelled in Crewe Circuit.

- 1869—Austin Davey, Isaac Harding.
- 1870—Austin Davey, Isaac Harding.
- 1871—W. Barrowclough, Isaac Harding.
- 1872—W. Barrowclough, J. H. Hopkins.
- 1873—W. Barrowclough, J. H. Hopkins.
- 1874—John Kirtlan, J. H. Hopkins.
- 1875—John Kirtlan, J. Boulter, S. Miles.
- 1876—John Kirtlan, J. Boulter, J. Todd.
- 1877—R. N. Barritt, J. Boulter, P. Hawkes.
- 1878—R. N. Barritt, H. J. Brookfield, P. Hawkes.
- 1879—J. L. Posnett, Charles Buzza, C. Holman.
- 1880—William Lees, Charles Buzza, Cæsar Caine.
- 1881—William Lees, Charles Buzza, Cæsar Caine.
- 1882—William Lees, Ebenezer Cole, Cæsar Caine.
-

Ministers who have gone out from the Circuit.

- G. Bolderston, St. Columb, Cornwall.
- M. J. Elliott, Wunagi, West Africa.
- Paul Ellis, Montserrat, West Indies.
- R. Calderbank, Wesleyan College, Birmingham.

MEMORANDA.

"March" returns of the numerical strength of
the Circuit.

PLACES.	1882	1883	1884	1885	1886	1887
Trinity	148					
Hightown	217					
Earle Street	56					
Wheelock	91					
Alsager (Chapel Lane) ...	20					
„ (Wesley Place) ...	40					
Coppenhall.....	37					
Shavington.....	15					
Haslington	20					
Minshull Vernon	14					
Weston	12					
Woolstanwood	8					
Total	678					

J. Hinchsliff, Printer, Victoria Street, Crewe.

